



Marjorie Agosín

Biography

Marjorie Agosín was born in Maryland and raised in Chile. She and her parents, Moises and Frida Agosín, moved to the United States due to the overthrow of the Chilean government by General Pinochet's military coup. Coming from a South American country and being Jewish, Agosín's writings demonstrate a unique blending of these cultures.

Agosín is well known as a poet, critic, and human activist. She is also a well-known spokesperson for the plight and priorities of women in Third World countries. Her deep social concerns and accomplishments have earned her many awards and recognitions, and she has gained an international reputation among contemporary women of color.

Agosín, a passionate writer, has received critical acclaim for her poetry collections, her close reflections on her parents and family, and her multi-layered stories. Within every novel, story, or poem, she captures the very essence of Jewish women at their best. Agosín's works reveal the experiences of pain and anguish of Jewish refugees. She writes about the Holocaust as well as anti-Semitic events that occurred in her native land.

In her collection of bilingual poems, *Dear Anne Frank*, Agosín shares a remarkable imaginary relationship with this Jewish girl who perished in a concentration camp during WWII. A specific poem from this collection is "Tapestries of Hope-Threads of Love," which details the life of a young woman under the Pinochet dictatorship.



Quick Facts

- * Born 1955
- * Her writings are inflected with her Jewish-Chilean identity
- * Memoirist, novelist, and poet

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In *Uncertain Travelers*, Agosín tells stories from multiple points of view that chronicle how her refugee European family acclimated to the unfamiliar territories in Chile. These stories are complex and discuss the difficulty of traveling for Jews between the years 1939 to 1970. Agosín has also interviewed nine Jewish women immigrants who arrived in the United States from Europe and Latin America during these decades. Some came as children, some as adults. Some were well off; others were refugees. These conversations reveal the women's diverse experiences of exile and demonstrate the varying attitudes immigrants have towards North and South American politics and culture.

Two books that reflect her close connection to her parents and family are *Always from Somewhere Else: A Memoir of my Chilean Jewish Father* and *A Cross and a Star: Memoirs of a Jewish Girl in Chile*. In *Always from Somewhere Else*, Agosín remembers her late father Moises. His life reflected the lives of many Jewish men: he was a doctor, a scientist, and a classical pianist. The memoir explores the boundaries of national and cultural identities. Yet one reviewer thought this book problematic: "Though the prejudice her family encountered was deplorable and undeserved, Agosín's black-and-white portrayal makes the history of their difficulties ring hollow, the stuff of allegories and fairy tales, not real life" (Kirkus 16).

In *A Cross and a Star: Memoirs of a Jewish Girl in Chile*, a mother and daughter narrate this beautifully written memoir. Agosín exposes the tremendous anti-Semitism that erupted during World War II, all the while capturing the astounding beauty of the southern tip of the world and the painful memories of a sensitive Jewish girl growing up among Nazi colonizers. "Agosín's courage in tackling thorny topics - Jewish diasporas, cultural estrangement, Latin American fascism - renders a highly personal narrative powerful and appealing" (Kirkus 8).

Agosín has many fascinating works and is recognized in both North and South America as one of the most versatile and provocative Latin American writers. Agosín became a writer to make a difference: "I wanted to change the world through peace and beauty," she said. Today she is not only a writer, but also a Spanish professor at Wellesley College.



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